

McCOLLUM: U.S. HAS A MORAL OBLIGATION TO PARTNER WITH LAOS TO HELP ELIMINATE UNEXPLODED BOMBS FROM THE VIETNAM WAR

Washington, D.C. - Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) addressed an audience of Hmong and Laotian Americans and human rights activists at a reception for the **Legacies of War**, a non-profit organization that is raising awareness about the secret U.S. bombings in Laos during the Vietnam War. Rep. McCollum was introduced by Ms. Channapha Khamvongsa, project director for Legacies for War, who is leading efforts to bring a traveling education exhibit to St. Paul, Minnesota.



Courtesy of Congresswoman Betty McCollum

Speaking with Doua Thor, Executive Director of the Southeast Asian Resource Action Center and St. Paul native Nira Ly.

"The United States has a **moral obligation** to partner with the people of Laos to help eliminate the ordinance and put the land back into productive use for this impoverished nation.

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. relentlessly bombed Laos for a decade in an effort to cut off North Vietnamese supply lines. From 1964 to 1973, the U.S. flew 580,000 bombing runs over Laos.

More than 2 million tons of ordinance were dropped [on Laos]. Up to thirty percent of the bombs failed to detonate, leaving millions of unexploded bombs littered throughout the country.

"These dangerous weapons are being harvested by poor Laotians, including small children, who are in search of scrap metal to sell, endangering their lives and the lives of others. This is an important human rights

issue - hundreds of women and children are killed and injured each year.

"The Legacies of War project seeks to respond to this tragedy by educating the international community about the clandestine U.S. bombardment of Laos during the Vietnam War, and to advocate for intensifying UXO clean-up efforts.

I am committed to working on this issue to ensure that legacies of war, such as this one, will not be forgotten."

McCollum secured \$2.5 million in the Fiscal Year 2005 Omnibus Appropriations bill for removal of unexploded U.S. bombs in Laos. She also led the passage in Congress of historic legislation to normalize trade relations with Laos, ending 30 years of economic isolation. It was signed into law on December 3, 2004 by President Bush, beginning a new era of bilateral relations between the U.S. and Laos.



Courtesy of Congresswoman Betty McCollum

Discussing the Legacies of War project with director Channapha Khamavong and Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation co-founder Robert Muller in Washington, D.C.

